

Mick McCabe's top prep football teams: Nos. 6-25

8:19 PM, August 24, 2013 |



Southfield, here on the first day of practice, should have the top defensive line in the state. / Andre J. Jackson/Detroit Free Press



By [Mick McCabe](#)

Detroit Free Press Sports Writer

(ALL PLAYERS SENIORS UNLESS NOTED)

6. Birm. Detroit Country Day

Top players: Tyler Wiegiers, 6-4, 215; WR Maurice Ways, 6-4, 200; RB Richie Wilson, 5-11, 215; C Mihir Dekhne, 6-3, 245; OG/DL Charlie Nino, 6-3, 260; LB Cal Coffman; DE/TE Derrick Coleman, 6-4, 220.

Coach: Dan MacLean, 112-64, 16th season at Country Day.

Overview: The Yellowjackets could wind up where they finished last season — in the Division 4 title game — and win it this season. Wiegiers (Rutgers) is an exceptional passer and Ways (Michigan) is a terrific receiver. Making them more effective is the running of Wilson (Boston College), who is tougher to stop the closer he gets to the goal line.

7. Southfield

Top players: DE Lawrence Marshall, 6-4, 230; OT/DT Malik McDowell, 6-7, 285; QB Jalen Brady, 6-0, 195; OT Chukes Okorafor, 6-5, 290; LB Jordan Cry, 6-1, 215; LD Chris Williams, 6-3, 255; DL Lion King Conaway, 6-5, 225.

Coach: Tim Conley, 52-32, 8th season at Southfield.

Overview: With the transfer of McDowell from Detroit Loyola to team with Marshall, Southfield should have the top defensive line in the state. Brady, a transfer from Grand Ledge, is an excellent passer. This could be Southfield's best team in decades.

8. Macomb Dakota

Top players: DB/WR David Basirico, 6-1, 180; QB Tyler Crowell, 6-4, 205; junior DE Tony Balabani, 6-2, 235; NT Brandon Lozon, 6-2, 265; LB Niko Savich, 5-10, 210; OT Scott Masyra, 6-1, 265; OG Greg Brohl, 6-2, 235.

Coach: Mike Giannone, 130-44, 16th season at Dakota.

Overview: The Cougars should be the team to beat in the competitive MAC Red because of seven returning defensive starters. Basirico is a difference-maker on both sides of the ball. Balabani could become a dominating force on the defensive line. How far Dakota goes in the state playoffs could depend on the development of Crowell, who is an impressive passer, but lacks varsity experience.

9. Novi Det. Catholic Central

Top players: DE/TE Dylan Roney, 6-2, 235; DB/WR-RB-QB Zach Bock; DL Alex Galiyas, 6-2, 245; LB/TE David Wright, 6-1, 195; DB/RB Dan Collins, 5-9, 185; QB/DB Sean Birney, 6-0, 180.

Coach: Tom Mach, 333-82, 38th season at CC.

Overview: For the most part, this is a young CC team that is vying for its third straight appearance in the Division 1 championship game. The Shamrocks will play their typically tough defense, led by Roney. Bock is a do-it-all type player who may never come off the field.

10. DeWitt

Top players: QB Jake Johnson, 6-2, 190; OT Chris Bukoski, 6-6, 265; R Justice Shankel, 6-1, 180; WR Josh Borta, 6-3, 180; WR/DB Chris Ruby, 5-10, 175, OG/DE Tyler Madar; junior LB Conner Grice, 5-10, 205.

Coach: Rob Zimmerman, 143-53; 136-33, 15th season at DeWitt.

Overview: A return to the Division 3 semifinals is not out of the question for this outfit that will fill the air with footballs, thanks to ability of Johnson and a bevy of talented receivers. They will help make DeWitt's running attack even more effective. The Panthers' defensive front will be bigger and that unit should be much improved.

11. Midland

Top players: RB Will Williams, 5-7, 160; OT Jacob Dostal, 6-3, 230; C Austin Rapanos, 6-0, 215; LB Michael Alexander, 6-0, 210; WR Austen Irrer, 6-5, 200; QB Tanner Gross, 6-1, 170.

Coach: Eric Methner, 81-42; 47-10, sixth season at Midland.

Overview: There is not much experience or size on this team, but the Chemics have solid speed up and down the roster. Williams was a slot receiver last season and should be good as the featured running back. Irrer has the speed to beat anyone deep and the size to be an excellent blocker in the trenches, Gross is an excellent athlete who will be a dual threat as the Chemics shoot for their 37th consecutive winning season.

12. Walled Lake Western

Top players: QB-K Kyle Bambar, 5-9, 176; OL Alex Joss, 6-5, 300; DL Brandon Mazell, 5-11, 205; WR David Walczyk, 6-1, 180; DL Edwin Martinez, 5-5, 193; DL Josh Jackson, 5-9, 236; LB John Simmons, 6-1, 185; LB Josh Daniel, 5-11, 190.

Coach: Mike Zdebski, 138-64, 16th season at Western.

Overview: Bambar is a three-year starter at QB and may be a bigger threat as a kicker. With 10 starters returning offensively and seven defensively from a regional finalist team, experience is not a problem. A key is the development of reliable receivers.

13. GR South Christian

Top players: Junior QB Jon Wassink, 6-3, 190; junior C Casey Elzinga, 6-1, 200; OG Travis Steenwyk, 6-0, 260; junior DE Mitch Quakkelaar, 6-3, 245; junior NG Brandon Huyser, 6-1, 300; DE Todd Postma, 6-5, 250; LB David Boomsma.

Coach: Mark Tamminga, 31-15, 6th season at South Christian.

Overview: Wassink passed for over 3,400 yards and ran for over 700 yards in helping the Sailors win the Division 4 state title. Wassink is in for another big year because Elzinga and Steenwyk will lead a standout offensive line. The defensive line is also going to be a dominating force.

14. Muskegon

Top players: QB/DB Deshaun Thrower, 6-2, 195; RB-WR/DB John Hall, 5-11, 185; OT Malik King; RB Javauntae Thomas, 5-11, 205; DT Ken Finley, 6-3, 292; LB William Hunt, 6-0, 225; NG Jacob Sims, 5-9, 245; DB Jordan Waire, 6-1, 165.

Coach: Shane Fairfield, 54-32; 28-9, 4th season at Muskegon.

Overview: The defense will have to carry the Big Reds early and with returners like Finley, Hunt and Sims among the front seven it will be difficult to run on Muskegon. Thrower will do an excellent job running the spread offense and Hall will be a threat carrying the ball or catching it.

15. Orchard Lake St. Mary's

Top players: DB/WR Jalen Watts-Jackson, 5-11, 180; NG/RB Julian Jones, 6-0, 225; OG/DT Jeremy Schram, 6-5, 285; junior QB/DB Tyson Smith, 5-11, 180; junior LB/TE Michael Linehan, 6-1, 220; RB Jeff Robinson, 5-10, 225; RB/DB Mark Zanders, 5-8, 180; K Spencer Hurst, 5-11, 190.

Coach: George Porritt, 217-60, 25th season at St. Mary's.

Overview: The drive to return to the Division 3 championship game for the fifth straight season will be a bit bumpier for the Eaglets, who are not as deep as in the past. Watts-Jackson is terrific in the secondary and Jones leads a standout defensive line. The key may be the way Smith adapts to the quarterback spot, where he can be a dangerous runner.

16. Lowell

Top players: Junior DE Josh Colegrove, 5-10, 220; QB Kyler Shurlow, 6-0, 185; OG Matt Reitsma, 6-1, 240; DB Jeff Houston, 6-1, 190.

Coach: Noel Dean, 191-58; 169-32, 18th season.

Overview: The Red Arrows return only two starters on defense, but they will be in the running for their 15th consecutive playoff spot. Colegrove has been a starter defensively since his freshman year. Shurlow was a WR and DB last season, but will be efficient at QB. Lowell will have a balanced offense again and will be difficult to defend.

17. Farm. Hills Harrison

Top players: RB/LB Lorenzo Collins, 6-0, 217; junior QB Jevon Shaw, 5-9, 180; junior OT Dorian Williams, 6-4, 225; OT Kolby Nance, 6-3, 240; OG Jalin Kirkpatrick, 5-11, 250; junior LB Michael Ojemudia, 6-0, 170.

Coach: John Herrington, 43rd season at Harrison.

Overview: Look for a breakout year for Collins, who was slowed by a hamstring injury last season and still gained nearly 1,000 yards. Shaw started at QB the last three games a year ago and showed potential. The offensive line will be good and the defense has good overall speed.

18. Saline

Top players: Junior QBs Trent Theisen, 5-11, 180 and Travis Brown, 5-11, 180; DE John Smutny, 6-2, 250; OG Nick Sawyer, 6-4, 290; OT Max Recknagel, 6-6, 250; OT Travis Alexis, 6-3, 240; junior RB Kevin Gross, 6-0, 190; RB Griffin Wooley, 6-0, 175.

Coach: Joe Palka, 21st year; 10-2, 2nd year at Saline.

Overview: The Hornets may be flying under the radar because of last season's seniors, but they could be the surprise team in the SEC. Both Theisen and Brown are capable of running the offense at a high level. Gross and Wooley will have room to run thanks to a veteran offensive line. The question mark is developing four linebackers to lead the defense.

19. Canton

Top players: LB/TE Jake Boucher, 5-11, 185; DB/RB James Hall, 5-10, 175; DB Dan Kilgore, 5-9, 165; junior RB/DB Weston Price, 5-9, 165; junior OG Steve Lyle, 6-0, 250; OG Nathan Michalik, 5-10, 230; C KJ Wooley, 6-1, 230; junior QB Greg Williams, 6-2, 180; junior LB/RB Chuckie Turfe, 5-10, 185.

Coach: Tim Baechler, 172-60; 127-50, 16th season at Canton.

Overview: This will be another fast Canton team that returns seven offensive starters and five defensively. Williams does an excellent job managing the game and running the full-house T offense. A concern is the offensive line, but there are several talented backs. The defense should be exceptional.

20. Detroit King

Top players: DB/RB Avonte Maddox, 5-11, 175; DB/WR Jalen Embry, 6-0, 185; junior LB Tyriq Thompson, 6-2, 215; LB Carl Fuller, 6-3, 215; DE/TE Davon Austin, 6-2, 230.

Coach: Dale Harvel, 33-20; 29-15 fifth season at King.

Overview: The Crusaders will play their typical tough defense. Maddox, in only his second year of football, will play in a variety of positions offensively and is a threat to score every time he touches the ball. Embry is another big-play athlete on both sides of the ball. Cass may be the defending state champ, but King is the defending PSL champ.

21. East Grand Rapids

Top players: Junior QB Mikey Roth, 5-11, 170; OG Troy Gotch, 6-1, 198; junior LB/TE Carter Masek, 6-3, 215; junior K/P Noah Salasky, 5-7, 120; OT/DT Conor Conaboy, 5-11, 260.

Coach: Peter Stuursma, 142-22, 14th season at East.

Overview: East's string of 11 straight playoff appearances was snapped last season and the Pioneers are out to prove that was an aberration, despite playing in the rugged O-K White. Roth was impressive in starting the final five games last season and his understanding of the game is off the charts. East will be strong up front on both sides of the ball even without overwhelming size.

22. Lake Orion

Top players: RB Dominick Giovinazzo, 5-9, 185; junior RB Matt Krause, 5-9, 200; RB Corey Ester, 5-9, 170; RB-WR Zak Arnold, 6-0, 175; OL Nick Sally, 6-2, 200; DL Trenton Elkins, 5-9, 245; LB Brennan Rourke, 6-0, 205; LB/QB Connor Grant, 5-10, 185; DB Charlie Highlen, 5-9, 165.

Coach: Chris Bell, 151-61; 129-41, 16th season at Lake Orion.

Overview: The Dragons will have a big and experienced defense, which should be even better than last year's defense that advanced to the Division 1 semifinals. A key will be the development of the offensive line, which has to replace four starters. But it will be helped by an experienced backfield.

23. Grand Blanc

Top players: WR Brandon Scott, 5-11, 195; LB Alex Brackett, 6-2, 240; WE Matt Mastromatteo, 6-0, 170; RB Dante McGee, 5-7, 165; WR/DB Justin Rabidoux, 5-10, 165; OL Justin Kosak, 6-2, 230.

Coach: Joe Delaney, 116-91; 112-77, 20th season at Grand Blanc.

Overview: The nightmare for opposing teams is trying to match up with the Bobcats' speed on both sides of the ball. There are a ton of skill position players back, but replacing all-state QB Bart Williams will be a chore. Retooling the offensive and defensive lines won't be easy, but there is talent.

24. Plymouth

Top players: RB Derrick Rossell, 5-6, 140; OT/DL Jacob Lackey, 6-5, 260; WR Conner Stella, 6-1, 180; LB junior Shane Raymond, 5-10, 200; junior DL Logan Luttrell, 6-1, 205; K Viet Nguyen, 6-1, 170.

Coach: Mike Sawchuk, 47-19, seventh season at Plymouth.

Overview: Being able to run the ball effectively is crucial for the Wildcats, and Rossell is the guy who can get it done. Replacing all four starters in the secondary could be difficult and there are holes in the defensive line, but there are eight players with experience capable of playing on the line.

25. Mt. Pleasant

Top players: RB Michael Tweh, 6-0, 210; RB Zach Rogers, 5-9, 180; sophomore WR Kaleb Perry, 6-3, 170; QB Robert Backus, 6-10, 160; junior QB Nick Burkholder, 6-1, 155; WR/DB Joe Genia, 5-11, 160; OG Erik Belco, 6-2, 275.

Coach: Jason McIntyre, 62-19, eighth season at Mt. Pleasant.

Overview: Many of the seniors saw extensive action as juniors. Tweh has run for over 3,000 yards and 33 TDs over the last two seasons and will have another good year. Backus and Burkholder are both capable QBs and Perry is a talented receiver. The team's depth should improve the defense.